



File Code: 1950-1/2080

Date: November 1, 2010

Dear Interested Party:

The Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest is seeking your comments on a proposed project to manage invasive plants on the Forest. Invasive plants are defined as non-native plants whose introduction cause, or are likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. They include species on the Washington State Noxious Weed list (http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/weed_list/weed_list.htm), such as spotted knapweed, tansy ragwort, and Japanese knotweed.

Invasive plants can displace native plant communities, increase fire hazard, degrade fish and wildlife habitat, eliminate rare and cultural plants, increase soil erosion, and adversely affect scenic beauty and recreational opportunities. Because of their competitive abilities and a lack of natural control agents to keep them in check, invasive plants can spread rapidly across the landscape, unimpeded by ownership or administrative boundaries.

Purpose and Need

There is a need for restoration of native plant communities that have been degraded by invasive plants. The purpose of the proposed action is containment, control, and eradication of invasive plants on the Forest. The intent is to control invasive plants in a cost-effective manner that complies with environmental standards.

Existing Management

Noxious weed control is currently taking place on the Forest under both the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie (MBS) Environmental Assessment (EA) *Proposed Treatment of Invasive Plants and New Invaders Strategy* (2005) and parts of the Region 6 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) *Pacific Northwest Region Invasive Plant Program Preventing and Managing Invasive Plants* (2005). The 2005 MBS Environmental Assessment can be viewed at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/about/botany-program.shtml>. The Region 6 Environmental Impact Statement can be viewed at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/invasiveplant-eis/>.

Proposed Action

The proposed project will differ from existing management in five ways:

- Treat approximately 3353 acres with a combination of treatments including herbicide, manual, mechanical and biological agents. The acreage projection is based on 590 known invasive plant sites, with a total of 43 invasive plant species. Treatments may be repeated over several years until control and site restoration objectives are met. The invasive plant species being considered for treatment are listed online under “Supplemental Information about the Proposed Action” (see the link provided at the end of this bullet list).
- Add the range of herbicides, surfactants, and biological controls already approved under the 2005 Region 6 Record of Decision for Prevention and Management of Invasive



Plants. The herbicides, surfactants, and biocontrols being considered for use are listed under the “Supplemental Information about the Proposed Action” (see the link provided at the end of this bullet list).

- Since the publication of the Region 6 EIS a new chemical, aminopyralid, has been found to have lower risk to aquatic organisms than previously approved herbicides and higher effectiveness on particular invasive plants. The MBS proposes to add aminopyralid to the range of treatment options. The published Risk Assessment for aminopyralid is also included in the “Supplemental Information about the Proposed Action” (see the link provided at the end of this bullet list).
- The MBS 2005 EA allows the application of chemicals by hand wiping, backpack sprayers, or stem injection only. For a small number of dense infestations covering large areas, the MBS proposes to add the use of boom sprayers, already approved under the Region 6 EIS.
- The 2005 MBS EA incorporated a process for treating newly discovered weed sites (“New Invaders Strategy”, MBS Forest Plan Amendment #26). The MBS proposes to refine the set of criteria to allow a more rapid response to high priority new infestations, a process known as Early Detection, Rapid Response (EDRR). The initial list of Management Requirements and Mitigation Measures, used to prevent impacts to non-target resources, are included in the “Supplemental Information about the Proposed Action” (see the link provided at the end of this bullet list).

The interdisciplinary team working on this project has developed a website for your convenience. The website contains supplemental information about the proposed action including maps of the proposed treatment sites, descriptions of treatment areas, and additional information on the proposal. Updates and other information will be available on the site.

The website address is: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/about/botany-program.shtml>. Information for this project will be posted under the heading “Invasive Plants, Current Projects”.

Public Involvement and Request for Comments

The Forest Service is scoping for issues that the environmental analysis should address. Your input will be used to analyze the effects of the proposed action or to develop alternatives and mitigation measures. A 30-day public comment period will continue until December 8, 2010.

In an effort to reduce paper use, the Forest Service will emphasize electronic correspondence and media throughout this project. Please include with your comment: 1) a valid e-mail address, 2) a valid mailing address, 3) your document format preference (online, CD-ROM or paper copy).

The project website will be the primary avenue through which the Forest Service will provide information about this project. Again, that web address is:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/about/botany-program.shtml>.

If you prefer to have paper copies of project documents, please contact Laura Potash Martin at the phone number in the following paragraph.

Electronic comments are preferred via email to mbs_invasiveplantNEPA@fs.fed.us (note the underscore after mbs). Written comments should be mailed or dropped off in person to:

Laura Potash Martin, Project Leader
2930 Wetmore Ave, Suite 3A
Everett, WA 98201

Comments received in response to this letter, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the project Record and available for public review. Office hours for submitting hand-delivered comments are 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments can be provided at the Supervisor's Office during normal business hours or via telephone at (425) 783-6043. If you any questions regarding the proposed action please contact the project leader, Laura Potash Martin by phone at this number.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

/s/ Y. Robert Iwamoto

Y. ROBERT IWAMOTO
Forest Supervisor